RICHARD LINDNER

Richard Lindner was born in Germany in 1901. He grew up there, living and studying in Nurenberg, Berlin and Munich. As a Jew and a Social-Democrat, he prudently moved to Paris in 1933 and the United States in 1941. He made his living as an illustrator until 1950 and since then has devoted himself to painting.

Richard Lindner's paintings first began to attract wide attention about the same time that the "Pop-art" movement was getting under way. At the time, it was assumed by many people that Lindner was allied with that group. His subjects are often taken from "popular" culture. There are corseted, stockinged, booted, leather-jacketed, voluptuous, women; mini-skirted, lollipop-licking, Lolitas; short-trousered, hulking popsicle sucking, mama's boys; shadowy, dangerous-looking policemen; and mustachioed, cold, crafty looking men who appear to be ordering and controlling the figures and events around them. This is the world of funhouses, burlesque theaters, city streets, and amusement parks; all subjects that could hardly be more "popular". Despite the eroticism of much of the subject matter, however, the artist retains a certain "coolness", unlike such artists as Reginald Marsh, for example. He is an admirer of Warhol's insistent commitment to "coolness" and even boredom as an aesthetic element.

The large, simplified, forms defined by clear-cut contours and the strong, clean colors applied flatly with no concern for brushstroke as an expressive device, are reminiscent of Roy Lichtenstein, and of Léger, an artist who influenced both Lichtenstein and Lindner. This is an influence which -- along with that of Giotto and the contemporary French painter Balthus -- Linder readily acknowledges.

And yet his paintings are very different from Lichtenstein's, Wesselmans's or Rosenquist's. For example, a comic strip image by Lichtenstein cooly but insistantly lampoons the vulgarity and banality of certain cultural values and sentiments. Its impact is strong and it is comprehended all at once. On the other hand, almost any painting by Lindner requires attention and study. The images also have a strong and immediate impact, but beyond that they function as symbols in a complex iconology. One must learn to "read" them if they are to be fully understood and appreciated. Despite the popular images, therefore, Lindner is a traditional painter in his concern with "meaning" in a specific, intellectual sense.

Louis II, for example, while it is rather an unusual subject for Lindner, is typical so far as the range and depth of meanings of the images is concerned. It is an imaginary portrait of "mad" King Ludwig of Bavaria, a ruler whose reign during the nineteenth

century included scandals such as an abortive betrothal to a Bavarian duchess, a peculiar "friendship" with Richard Wagner, and a binge of castle building all over the landscape of Bavaria. He was deposed on a charge of insanity and comitted suicide by drowning himself in a shallow pool of water. A physically enormous and attractive figure he is pictured here in the embrace of a geometrical female-like figure apparently composed of elements based on German dueling costumes. The young king is without hands and his forehead is marked with a small target -- part of the dueling costume. In the lower left hand corner, a profile portrait of the artist as a young student appears. The strangely smiling, vacant expression of Ludwig is crossed by a sinister blue shadow covering the lower part of his face. Mystery, nostalgia, and history all play a part in the painting's meaning.

The Portrait of Marcel Proust, is also an impressive psychological study that surely is based on imagination, photographs, and literature rather than life. It is Proust's writings and writings about Proust that must have provided the poignant psychological character of the painting. Thus, we have an individualized portrait of Proust based on a knowledge, not of the man, but of his art.

Woman in a Corset, is much more varied and complicated formally. The figure of the woman is composed of various, flat, abstract shapes based on elements of the female anatomy and its "armor". The background appears to be even more abstract, geometrical and severe in character. The works of this period are obviously related to Léger's paintings, although the comparison makes it clear that Lindner is less objective than the French master.

Telephone is a more recent work with an extremely potent image in the artist's fully developed style. The influence of Giotto, Léger, and Balthus, as well as Bavarian folk art, the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, and American popular art have been absorbed, digested, and transformed into a powerful imagery and style that is purely Lindner's own. The Valkyrian, vinyl-packaged female figure and the doughy-faced, "shaded", mod-styled male figure stand back to back, jammed into booths, holding the twentieth century's ubiquitous gadget for communication up to expressionless faces. Busked, masked, completely armored against real human communication, they only slightly exaggerate one of the symptoms of todays machine-made, line-assembled, pre-packaged, plasticized, popular culture.

Lindner has not invented these figures, all he has done is to recognize, define, and reveal them. And he is not really critical of them, only, apparently, amused.

Some of the works in this exhibition are for sale.
For further information please call Extension 331.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Boy, oil on canvas, 38 x 26 inches, 1955,
lent by Cordier & Ekstrom Inc.

Coney Island, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches, 1961,
lent by Noah Goldowsky Gallery.

Drawing, pencil and color on paper, 25–1/2 x 15 inches, 1968,
lent by Mr. and Mrs. Arne H. Ekstrom.

Louis II, oil on canvas, 50 x 40 inches, 1962,
Contemporary Collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art.

Pause, oil on canvas, 50 x 35 inches, 1961,
lent by Cordier & Ekstrom Inc.

Portrait of Marcel Proust, oil on canvas, 28 x 24 inches, 1950,
lent by Private Collection.

Rock-Rock, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 inches, 1966,
lent by Private Collection.

Telephone, oil on canvas, 70 x 60 inches, 1966–67,
lent by Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc.

The Target, oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches, 1960,
lent by Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc.

Untitled, collage and pencil, 8–3/4 x 6 inches, 1962,
lent by Mr. and Mrs. Arne H. Ekstrom.

Untitled, watercolor on paper, 40 x 28–1/4 inches, 1967,
lent by Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc.

West 48th Street, oil on canvas 70–1/8 x 50 inches, 1961,
lent by Noah Goldowsky Gallery.

With Wig #2, collage and oil, 8–1/2 x 5–3/4 inches, 1962,
lent by Mr. and Mrs. Arne H. Ekstrom.

Woman in Corset, oil on canvas, 25 x 18 inches, 1956,
lent by Cordier & Ekstrom, Inc.